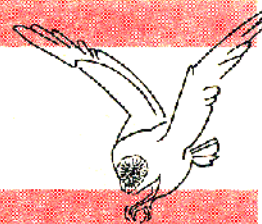


NATURALLY KENTUCKY

Number 30. Spring and Summer 1999



And Kentucky's top 10 streams for rare species and biodiversity conservation are...

By Ronald R. Cicerello and Ellis L. Lauder milk

One of the challenges faced in efforts to conserve rare organisms and biodiversity is how to prioritize sites for protection. This is especially important for aquatic organisms. The North American and Kentucky freshwater fish, mussel, and crayfish faunas are among the world's richest. Unfortunately, these groups of organisms along with amphibians are the most imperiled among all groups in the U.S.

Last year, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) completed a nationwide analysis of watersheds of prime importance for protecting our most imperiled fishes and mussels. Imperiled organisms are those listed as endangered or threatened by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and others that are rare regionally. Other groups such as crayfishes and aquatic insects were excluded from the analysis because we know far less about the distribution and status of their members. Data for the analysis were provided by state Heritage Programs, like ours at KSNPC, supplemented with information from experts and scientific literature.

We refined the TNC list by (1) subdividing major drainages (e.g., the Big South Fork Cumberland River (BSF) was split into the BSF and the Little South Fork Cumberland River (LSF) basins), (2) excluding species not considered rare in Kentucky, and (3) excluding those inhabiting sections of a watershed that extend outside of the state. Based on this analysis, the top 10 Kentucky streams and the number of imperiled fishes and mussels they support are:

- (1) Upper Green River - 23
- (2) Barren River - 11
- (3) Big South Fork Cumberland River - 10
- (4) Rockcastle River - 9
- (5) Little South Fork Cumberland River - 9
- (6) Buck Creek - 8
- (7) Lower Tennessee River - 8
- (8) Licking River - 7
- (9) Lower Ohio River - 7
- (10) Red River (western KY) - 7

Aquatic biologists have been aware of the importance of these streams for some time. For example, The Kentucky Chapter of TNC (KTNC) and KSNPC are planning a major effort to protect the upper Green River basin extending from Green River Lake Dam downstream to the Nolin River. In addition to imperiled aquatic organisms, this area's rich biodiversity includes 109 of Kentucky's 240+ native fishes, about 50 of its 84 remaining mussel species, Mammoth Cave National Park, the world's largest and most biologically rich cave system, and many other biological wonders. The upper Green is among the top four streams nationally for the conservation of imperiled fishes and mussels.

To further refine this list we added data for fishes and mussels that are rare in Kentucky but not necessarily elsewhere. For example, the alligator gar, a primitive fish that can grow to 10 feet in length, is relatively common in lower Mississippi River valley swamps, but it is extremely rare here.

Our mandate to identify and protect rare native species and communities does not extend beyond Kentucky's border, so the status of a fish or mussel in another state is immaterial. If a species is native to Kentucky, we want to maintain natural, reproducing populations in the Commonwealth. With the inclusion of this information the top 10 changes and includes two new entries (*):

- (1) Upper Green River - 28
- (2) Lower Ohio River - 18
- (3) Lower Tennessee River - 17
- (4) Barren River - 13
- (5) * Bayou de Chien/Obion Creek/
Mayfield Creek - 12
- (6) Rockcastle River - 12
- (7) * Terrapin Creek - 12
- (8) Big South Fork Cumberland
River - 11
- (9) Licking River - 11
- (10) Little South Fork Cumberland
River - 10

Some of the streams on both lists are essentially impossible to protect. The lower Ohio and Tennessee rivers have huge, highly developed watersheds. Buying even large tracts of land in this area would not necessarily protect them. Others like the LSF and Buck Creek are of a more manageable size but still pose tremendous protection challenges. Unfortunately, recent work by colleagues has revealed that the aquatic biota in both of these streams has declined significantly. The once highly diverse LSF mussel fauna, a remnant of the unique fauna that formerly inhabited the Cumberland River basin below Cumberland Falls, has been destroyed. And several nationally rare mussels in Buck Creek continue to decline. Both streams have been adversely impacted by the impoundment of the Cumberland River to form Lake Cumberland by unwise land use.

(Continued on Page 3)

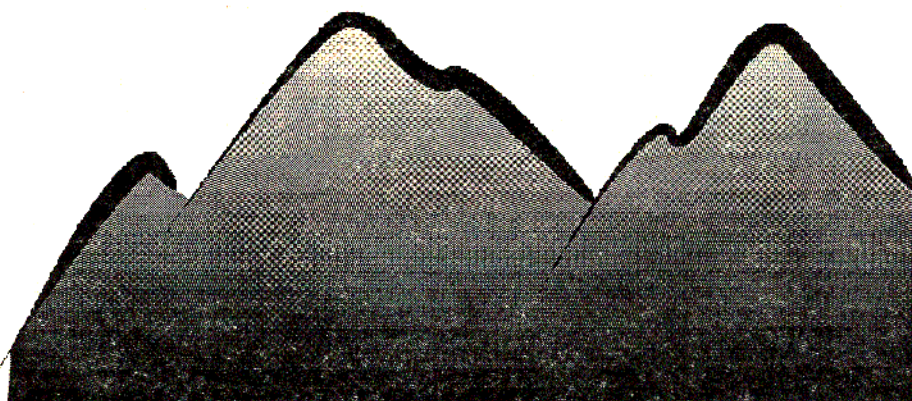
Director's Update

by Donald S. Dott

Hello Nature Enthusiasts!

I have survived my first seven months as Director, and I can report that I still enjoy the work! And I hope to have a long tenure, if the staff can tolerate me! Having been in the office most of the winter, I escaped for a Saturday in March to Crooked Creek Barrens (formerly known as Hymes Knob) in Lewis County to participate in a burn with the "Stew-Crew." This was a controlled burn of a grassland area to reduce the invasion of woody species and increase the amount of native grass cover over the fescue that is present. The "Stew-Crew" very professionally managed the burning of about 10 acres in two units under Dave Skinner's guidance, as he successfully completed an apprentice burn under the watchful eye of Joyce Bender. Although there is much joking about pyromaniacs, I was quite impressed with how much site preparation and teamwork goes into a burn. When the drip torch is lit, everyone gets quite serious. Monitoring plots were also established before the burn took place to help determine more precisely what affects the burn would have on the woody species as well as the native grasses and fescue in this community.

From the less fiery office news department we are in the process of adding new staff. Christi Loveless and Derek Beard have joined the Stewardship Program as eight-month seasonals who will travel the state completing a variety of preserve maintenance tasks. Both graduated from Eastern Kentucky University and we're glad to have them with us. We are also in the process of hiring two new environmental biologists, one to work on Natural Areas Inventory with Marc Evans, and the other to do rare plant survey work with Deb White. Last, but certainly not least, we are in the process of hiring a new data manager to maintain the Heritage Program database and ensure that the information technology in our office is up to par and continues to run smoothly.



WE'RE FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU!

I would like to enlist your support in an effort to spur passage of a VERY IMPORTANT piece of federal legislation. The *Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999* has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives as H.R. 701 and in the Senate as S. 25. This legislation will benefit Kentucky outdoor enthusiasts who fish, boat, hunt and view wildlife. It is in fact an effort to put money into an existing program that has never been fully funded, and thereby provide monies to the states for recreation, and nature and wildlife conservation. The bill is co-sponsored by Kentucky's U.S. Senator Jim Bunning and Representatives Ken Lucas, Ron Lewis, Hal Rogers and Ed Whitfield. Senator McConnell had not signed on at this writing, but is expected to do so. Your letters or phone calls will help ensure this legislation becomes a reality. Though it has a lot of support, it still has a long way to go. The legislation will direct that income received from the off-shore oil and gas industry is used for recreation, nature and wildlife conservation programs. It does not depend on increased taxes! This could potentially give Kentucky **\$12 million**. (See also the Fall 1998 edition of KDFWR's Kentucky Afield - The Magazine.) This program is also supported by President Clinton, who is expected to make a budget proposal to fund land conservation programs to the tune of about \$1 billion. And that's quite a tune! So you can add him to your letter writing (or email) list. If you have Web access check the "Teaming with Wildlife" site at: www.teaming.com

You can write to your members of Congress at:

The Honorable _____,
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
or
The Honorable _____,
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The following Web sites will help you identify your members of Congress and how to contact them: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> <http://www.senate.gov/senator/membmail.html>

You can also identify and contact your members of Congress by calling the US Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. The switchboard operator will transfer you to your senator or representative's office. If you do not know who represents you, just give the switchboard operator your zip code and he/she will find out for you.

BLACK MOUNTAIN GETS THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES!

Negotiations are ongoing, but preservation of Black Mountain appears headed for a positive resolution. The mountain has received front page press coverage in response to the signing of a "letter of intent" and a secondary agreement among the parties involved in the litigation of a petition to declare Black Mountain unsuitable for surface coal mining. The next step in the settlement process is to negotiate a sale to the state of the mineral and timber rights on the mountain within the next six months.

Director's Update

(continued from Page 2)

Some newspaper articles have given the impression that KSNPC has been involved in the negotiations, because we are identified as the probable agency to receive any ownership interests acquired on the mountain. We have not been in the negotiations, though I whole-heartedly agree with the effort to reach an agreement to protect the mountain and put it under KSNPC auspices.

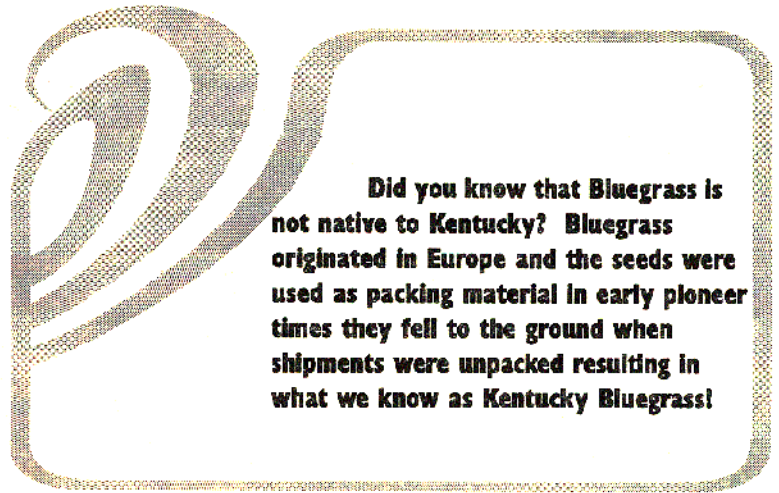
Because the negotiations are still active, by the time you read this everything may have changed. But at this date it looks very optimistic, and we expect the parties will negotiate a resolution to protect the unique biodiversity of Black Mountain.

Kentucky's Top Ten Streams

(Continued from Page 1)

In addition to the upper Green River, our major protection projects are Bad Branch and Terrapin Creek. The crystal clear water of Bad Branch and the organisms inhabiting it are relatively secure as KTNC and the Commission jointly own most of its watershed. Terrapin Creek is a small western Kentucky stream in Graves and Calloway counties that supports 41 fish species, 12 of which are rare, and 3 that occur nowhere else in Kentucky. Extensive wetlands border the stream and harbor deep, clear, fish-filled springs unlike any we have seen elsewhere in the Commonwealth. We have much work to do here, and in the upper Green River.

These lists have shortcomings (e.g., species that live only in Kentucky and are not rare are excluded, large rivers are favored, and other animal and plant groups are not represented), but they help to focus our protection efforts. All of Kentucky's many streams should sustain native life forms characteristic of unpolluted conditions. We should be able to enjoy them without jeopardizing our health. Unfortunately, most of our rivers have been highly altered. Their integrity and biodiversity must be restored. As the remaining crown jewels of Kentucky's aquatic heritage, the streams listed above are especially worthy of our efforts.



Did you know that Bluegrass is not native to Kentucky? Bluegrass originated in Europe and the seeds were used as packing material in early pioneer times they fell to the ground when shipments were unpacked resulting in what we know as Kentucky Bluegrass!

Kentucky's Newest Nature Preserve to be Dedicated on June 15

By Barry Howard

Approval of the next addition to Kentucky's system of state nature preserves is planned to coincide with the upcoming June 15 meeting of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (KSNPC). At this meeting, Commissioners will be asked to approve Articles of Dedication for 60 acres of land which will be known as Crooked Creek Barrens State Nature Preserve. This site, which contains a rare and unusual "barrens" plant community, will become Kentucky's 38th state nature preserve. (For more on Crooked Creek Barrens, see the next issue of "Naturally Kentucky".)

A field trip and brief ceremony is planned for the morning of Tuesday, June 15 at this Lewis County site. The Commission meeting will follow that afternoon in nearby Maysville, Kentucky. For more information on how you can participate in either of these events please contact KSNPC at (502) 573-2886.

Dates to Remember:

**June 15th - Dedication Ceremony
at Crooked Creek Barrens
SNP, 9 a.m., Lewis County**
**June 15th - KSNPC Commission Meeting,
1:30 p.m., 212 Bridge Street,
Maysville**

**Please contact the Commission at 502 573-2886 or
check out our web-site for upcoming events:
<http://www.nr.state.ky.us/nrepc/dnr/ksnpc/index.htm>**

Pilot Knob Nature Preserve Expanded

by Barry Howard

The Commissioners of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (KSNPC) voted on March 16 to dedicate 340 acres as an addition to Pilot Knob State Nature Preserve. The financial resources that made this addition possible were provided by the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund.

Pilot Knob in Powell County is a prominent feature in both the natural and cultural heritage of Kentucky. This knob occupies a conspicuous place in the landscape and is widely thought to be the vantage point from which Daniel Boone first gazed upon the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. Biologically, the forests on and around Pilot Knob contain good examples of the flora, fauna, and ecological communities of this region. In addition, the land surrounding this knob contains unique elements of our history.

At 1,446 feet elevation above sea level, Pilot Knob is the highest of several knob-shaped hills in northwestern Powell County. Rising almost 700 feet

above some of the surrounding valleys, the summit affords a unique panorama of three distinctly different land forms: the Bluegrass, the Knobs, and the Cumberland Plateau. Today these knobs are often considered to be a subsection of the Bluegrass physiographic region, but in the past they have been thought of as a subsection of the Cumberland Plateau. Indeed, in this area the Knobs share features from each region and comprise a transition zone between the two.

The forests in this area are also somewhat transitional, possessing elements from both the Mixed Mesophytic Forest region which is found east of Pilot Knob, and the Oak Hickory Forest region to the west. The summit of Pilot Knob is dominated by a pine-oak-heath community, which is common on many of the dry ridgetops of the nearby Cumberland Plateau. Including the newest addition, almost one square mile of contiguous forest is now protected within Pilot Knob State Nature Preserve. Large blocks of forest that are managed for their natural as opposed to commer-

cial values are becoming increasingly rare and it is likely that we have yet to fully ascertain their importance.

The land around Pilot Knob is known to contain unusual cultural features. An area only a few miles from this site was the location of a prominent native American village called *Eskippakithiki*. This village was well known to early Kentucky explorers and traders. According to Daniel Boone himself, it was in this area that Boone "from the top of an eminence, saw with pleasure the beautiful level of Kentucky..." Pilot Knob is widely thought to be the location of the "eminence" mentioned by Boone.

Pilot Knob also played an important role as a source for the hard, conglomerate rock that was used by early settlers to make millstones. Millstones were shaped by splitting and shaping boulders that were found on the sides of this knob and its surroundings. There are several locations on and near Pilot Knob where one can find evi-

(Continued on Page 7)

Tragedy on Pine Mountain

by Joyce Bender

During an outing to Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve on May 15, KSNPC stewardship staff and volunteers discovered a tragedy. Instead of enjoying the beauty of a leisurely hike across the preserve and down the Watts Creek drainage on the adjoining old growth Smukler tract, the group found stumps and churned earth as they stepped onto the Smukler property. Considered by some to be the prettiest drainage within Blanton Forest, the bulldozed roads, felled trees and cast off tree tops littering the slopes destroyed even the memory of beauty in the head of Watts Creek. Following the muddy gashes down the slope, despairing with each stump I saw, the destruction finally ended at the upstream end of the bog.

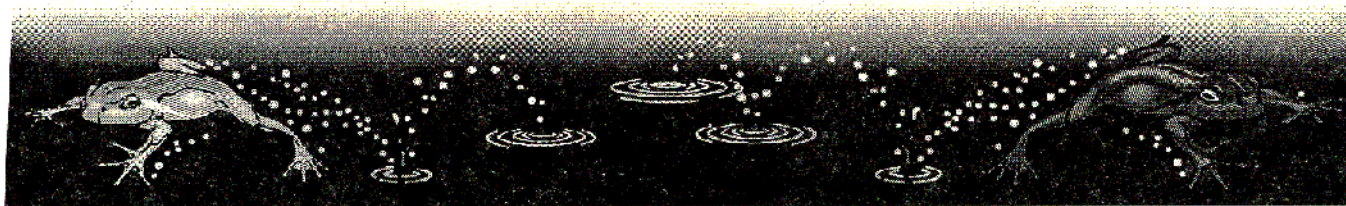
Someone had done unspeakable damage to one of Kentucky's most irreplaceable treasures. A road had been bulldozed over the crest of the mountain from a logging operation on the north side of Pine Mountain. A bulldozer had ripped a path to each big tree within about a fifteen to twenty acre area. About a hundred stumps have been counted so far and the total damage is being assessed as this is written.

Aside from losing state treasures in the form of 200+ year old trees, the careless operation of the bulldozer and skidder disturbed the headwaters of Watts Creek. This creek is considered an Outstanding Resource Water which supports the state and federally threatened fish,

Phoxinus cumberlandensis, the black side dace. The biological damage could even be greater since the bulldozed creek may disrupt the hydrology of the nearby bog, an invaluable component of natural filtration for the Watts Creek drainage. Monitoring studies will be needed to fully evaluate the impacts.

There is some good news coming out of this situation, the culprit has been found. There will be more on this aspect in the next newsletter. Also, the logging stopped at the preserve boundary. The Kentucky Natural Lands Trust and the Commission will be working to acquire this tract from the Smukler family.





Northern Leopard Frog Surveys Produce Positive Results

By Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr.

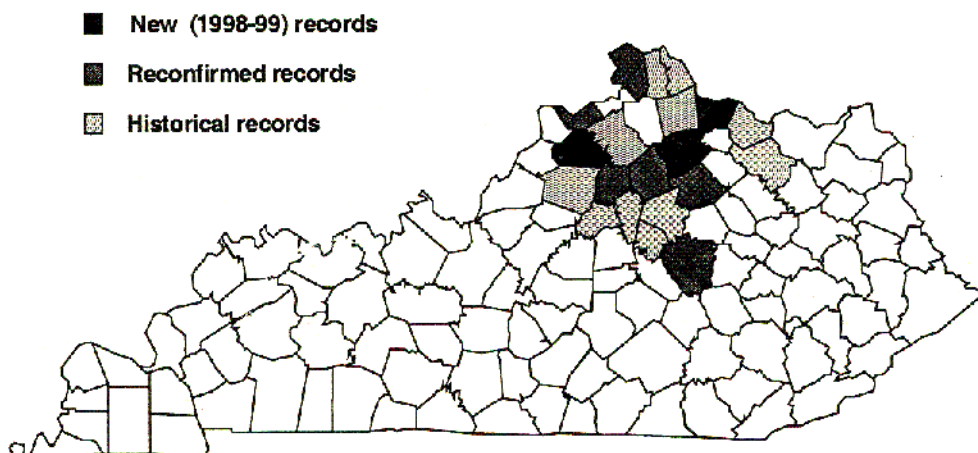
The northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*) is a relatively large frog with roundish, dark spots scattered across the back and sides. Its mating call is a guttural, drawn-out snore or clucking notes. This frog is one of a group of similar species occurring across North America that can be very hard to tell apart, but — thankfully — they usually don't occur together in the same region. In Kentucky the northern leopard frog can be easily confused with the southern leopard frog (*Rana utricularia*), which has a similar spotted pattern; however the southern leopard frog has a more rapid call and — as far as is known — does not occur in the same part of Kentucky. The pickerel frog (*Rana palustris*) also looks fairly similar, and it does coexist with the northern leopard frog, however, it has a much different call, a drawn-out snore of one slurred note.

In Kentucky the northern leopard frog has been confirmed to occur in at least 17 counties of the Bluegrass region (see map), although a majority of the records are rather old. In 1986, the Commission added the species to the list of Special Concern animals based on its restricted Kentucky range; the relative scarcity of breeding sites within that range, and a documented decline in a portion of the Inner Bluegrass region.

During the past few years, I have helped conduct spring surveys for the northern leopard frog in north-central Kentucky, checking on historical locations and looking for new breeding sites. Males typically begin calling in late March or early April, with breeding activity continuing into late April or early May, so our window of opportunity for conducting nocturnal calling surveys is rather narrow. The species seems to be somewhat adaptable in its use of breeding sites; we have found them calling in idle farm ponds, marshy meadows, and slow-moving streams. Each year, we have been able to conduct at least a few good nights of work, listening for choruses of calling males. Since 1997, northern leopard frogs have been heard at about two-dozen probable breeding sites in nine counties: Boone, Bourbon, Bracken, Carroll, Franklin, Harrison, Henry, Madison, and Scott. Records in Bracken, Harrison and Henry counties are the first ever documented from those areas, but we also have not been able to locate them at some places where they were known historically. The results of our surveys indicate that the northern leopard frog is still fairly widespread, although more field work will be necessary to determine the true status of this species in the state.

If you live in a Bluegrass county and know of probable northern leopard frog breeding sites, please contact me at 502/573-2886 (e-mail: brainard.palmer-ball@mail.state.ky.us). For a newly produced tape of the frog calls of Kentucky, contact Frog Loggers, Inc. at P.O. Box 25054, Lexington, KY, 40524-5054 (cost is \$8.00).

Kentucky Distribution of Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)



Spring Prescribed Burn Season a Great Success!

by Joyce Bender, Stewardship Coordinator

As the last flames flickered out on Paducah's Barkley Airport Prairie on April 13th, the Stewardship Program's most successful burn season came to a close. Forty-eight acres of grassland and oak barrens were put to the torch this year in an effort to reduce the coverage of woody species and fescue, to research soil nutrient cycling, enhance growing conditions for rare species such as prairie gentian (*Gentiana puberulenta*) and to provide training for stewardship staff. Given the vagaries of spring-time weather, completing burns from Lewis County to McCracken County is quite a logistical accomplishment.

Thirty acres were burned at Raymond Athey Barrens State Nature Preserve (SNP), and four acres were burned at Jim Scudder SNP. We burned another four acres at Barkley, and ten acres at our newest preserve, Crooked Creek Barrens. Rick Remington, our Western Regional Preserves Manager, completed his fire leader apprenticeship and is now authorized to conduct prescribed burns for the Commission. Dave Skinner, our Eastern Regional Preserves Manager, began his apprenticeship this spring. New permanent staff members Bree McMurray, Kyle Napier, and Paul Quinlan as well as seasonals Christi Loveless and Derek Beard received valuable experience burning in a variety of community types under a range of fire weather conditions.

The concept of a team effort was readily apparent as we prepared to conduct each prescribed burn. Each staff member was assigned a role and did their job every time without fail, even when we were tired and had to mop up after sundown. The long hours put in and the miles traveled to do the job did not dull anyone's senses as each responded to changes in fire behavior and weather conditions. Bryce Fields and Director Don Dott became honorary stewardship staff this spring when they assisted on two of our burns. It meant a lot to us to have our Director getting his hands (and the rest of himself) dirty on the fire line.



KSNPC Clean-up Staff included (front row, l-r) Nick Drozda, Bryce Fields, Christi Loveless, Bree Enderle, Joyce Bender, Dave Skinner, Tim Clarke (back row l-r) Marc Evans, Amy Covert, Barry Howard, Don Dott, Ronald Cicerello, Derek Beard and Ellis Lauder milk

Other KSNPC team members whose work was more behind the scenes but just as important were staff ecologists Aissa Feldmann and Martina Hines, who consulted on sampling methods and sampled the vegetation prior to our burns and will sample again this year. Volunteer Karen Quinlan diligently watched a smoldering snag for us as we completed our second fire unit at Crooked Creek. She also filled in as photographer that day.

Our success depends on help from other teams of folks around the state who are willing to give us a hand whenever we need them. The Northeastern District of the Division of Forestry sent Dave Stafford and his crew to assist on our Crooked Creek burn and the Division's central office loaned Nomex gear small enough to fit Bree. We thank Dave and his crew and Bernie Anderson for their help this spring. We received fire weather forecasts from the fire staff at the Daniel Boone National Forest and we would like to thank them for providing this vital information, even on the weekends. One other team member this spring was Kentucky State Police Trooper Bill Lockwood who maintained traffic safety on US 60 while we burned our roadside unit at Barkley.

To truly gauge our success in ecological terms, we will sample our plots during this growing season to see the fire's effects. Dr. Charles Rhoades and Dr. Tom Barnes will submit reports by the end of the year on their respective nutrient cycling study and fescue eradication project at Raymond Athey Barrens. And Rick will keep a close eye on our prairie gentian patch this fall, looking for an increase in the blooms that match the blue October sky.

Pilot Knob

(Continued from Page 4)

dence of millstone production. Due to unseen flaws in some of the rocks, several stones were abandoned at various stages of production, leaving for us evidence of a seldom-glimpsed chapter of early Kentucky history. A portion of Pilot Knob has been protected since 1976, when The Nature Conservancy purchased 308 acres of land from the Spencer and Morton families. The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission purchased this land in 1985 using funds obtained through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. This newest addition increases the total amount of land protected at this site to 648 acres.

Pilot Knob State Nature Preserve is currently managed by KSNPC with assistance from Eastern Kentucky University through an agreement with KSNPC. Existing visitor facilities include a 1.75 mile trail to the summit and a small one-half mile self-guided interpretive trail to one of the millstone sites.

The preserve is open dawn to dusk for passive recreational activities such as hiking, nature study, and bird watching. To reach Pilot Knob, exit the Mountain Parkway at Clay City and follow KY 15 north for 2.7 miles. Turn right on Brush Creek Road, and go 1.5 miles to a gravel parking area.

Stipuled scurf pea: Searching for a Piece of Natural Heritage

by Nicholas Drozda and Deborah White

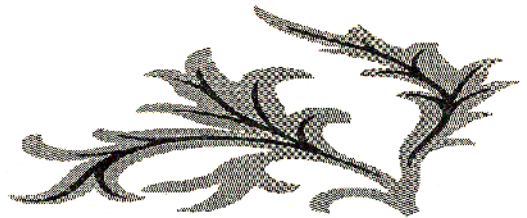
Stipuled scurf pea (*Orbexilum stipulatum*) is an herbaceous member of the bean family with pale blue flowers and leaves with three leaflets. It's only known locality is Rock Island at Falls of the Ohio, and the last confirmed collection was made in 1881.

Rock Island is a Devonian limestone outcrop in the Ohio River that formed part of the Falls of the Ohio in Jefferson County. Much of the exposed land at Falls of the Ohio, including Rock Island, was submerged as the result of dam construction. Since this is the only known location for Stipuled scurf pea, it is presumed extinct. Although the Indiana Heritage program searched their Ohio River shoreline in 1993, a thorough search has not been conducted in Kentucky. Fortunately, the Nature Conservancy and Cannon Corporation awarded funding for our proposal to search for a plant that's been missing for over a hundred years.

Sometimes the search for rare plants must proceed from a different angle. In this case a very steep angle. Early last June, Senior Botanist Deborah White, Senior Ecologist Marc Evans and I used helicopter reconnaissance to locate

habitat along the Ohio River similar to that found on Rock Island in the 1800s. Our flight started just upstream of Henderson and continued upriver to the Falls of the Ohio. The sites we considered as possible habitat consisted of exposed rock shelves, and gravel and cobble shoreline. We noticed that most of this type of shoreline is located on the outside of river bends where the water cuts into a steep hillside. With this information we identified additional sites to use in our field search along the river upstream of the Falls.

No one has seen Stipuled scurf pea alive in over a hundred years and written descriptions often fail to adequately describe characters required to recognize a plant in the field. How did we know what to look for in the field? One valuable tool in the search for rare plants is the herbarium. Plants collected by botanists that are pressed and mounted on paper and stored in an herbarium (a plant museum). With well preserved herbarium specimens it is possible to see and feel a plant that otherwise could not be examined firsthand, for instance, a plant for which the only known location is now under water. We were able to use photographs of the historical specimens as well as written descriptions to develop an accurate



search image of Stipuled scurf pea.

Our efforts in the field were confounded by a very wet late spring and early summer in the Ohio Valley and unusually high river levels well into July. In fact some of the shoreline that we had identified from the air as possible habitat was submerged two weeks later. However, with a little patience and some good weather in July we were able to visit all of the best sites we had identified.

Unfortunately, we were unable to locate Stipuled scurf pea and, for now we are resigned to the idea that it is one of the lost pieces of Kentucky's natural heritage. Equally disheartening was the poor quality of shoreline communities along the river. It is likely that changes in the Ohio River's hydrology have altered the composition of its shoreline flora. In a drier year we perhaps will have an opportunity to re-visit these communities at the water's edge to see what natural components are still present.

KSNPC Participates in First "Commonwealth Cleanup" Week

By Tim Clarke

Unanimously adopted House Resolution HJR121 of the 1998 General Assembly proclaims the fourth week of March as "Commonwealth Cleanup" week, and directs the Natural Resources Cabinet to support communities that engage in spring cleaning. KSNPC wanted to show our support for this resolution, and we needed to look no further than our own backyard for an appropriate place to begin.

Adjacent to our office building on Schenkel Lane is a steep ravine called Penitentiary Branch. It is a spot with both historical and ecological significance to Frankfort, and a real nice place to walk on a lunch break. Unfortunately, the head of the branch is also an illegal dump site.

During the last century, in that time before air conditioning and ceiling fans, Kentuckians held political rallies at the bottom of Penitentiary branch to escape the heat and humidity of summer. Who can say what influence those stump speeches had upon our Commonwealth? If that isn't impor-

tant enough, a very rare plant - Braun's Rockcress (*Arabis perstellata*) - occurs on the slopes of Penitentiary branch near the vicinity of the dump. Nearly all occurrences of this plant in the entire world fall within Franklin county, and it is only known to occur in Franklin, Henry and Owen counties.

Keeping all of this in mind, the staff of KSNPC and two friendly volunteers from the Division of Conservation - Mr. Mark Davis and Mr. Henry Duncan - assembled to give the dump site our best shot. When we finished, we had wrenched up over seventy bags of garbage and two truck beds full of scrap metal!

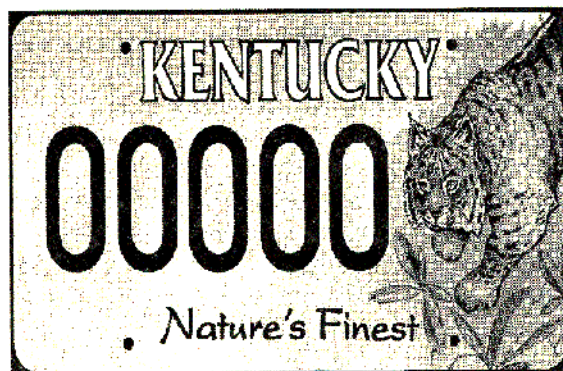
We look forward to the 2nd "Commonwealth Cleanup," but it shouldn't take a House Resolution to motivate us to clean up our illegal dumps. The only necessary items are a small dose of conviction, a group of conscientious volunteers, and a bunch of garbage bags. Take on a dump near you!

Bobcat "Roars" A Victory for the Next Nature License Plate

By Gail McGee

The voting results are in for the newest and final nature license plates. The Bobcat "roared" in to victory by a slim margin of 408 votes. Kentucky residents with a valid driver's license were able to vote over the internet or by visiting a display set up at various locations throughout the state.

Voting results:	Bobcat	2886	31%
	Whitetail Deer	2478	26%
	Viceroy Butterfly	2469	26%
	Spotted Bass	<u>1600</u>	<u>17%</u>
	TOTALS:	9,433	100%



The new license plate should be available by January 1, 2000. For only ten additional dollars, nature lovers can show their enthusiasm by purchasing the nature license plate of their choice. What's your favorite—the cardinal on a Kentucky coffee tree branch, the Kentucky warbler on a tulip poplar branch, or the newest, the bobcat?

Funds from the purchase of the nature license plate are deposited in the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund and are used for the purchase and management of nature preserves, wildlife management areas, state parks, recreation and environmental education areas, state forests, wild river corridors, and wetlands. This fund recently purchased our newest nature preserve, Crooked Creek Barrens, slated to be dedicated on June 15, 1999. (See story on page 3.)

An Equal Opportunity Employer M/F/H
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 David Skinner
 Deborah White

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It is the mission of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission to protect Kentucky's natural heritage by: (1) identifying, acquiring, and managing natural areas that represent the best known occurrences of rare native species, natural communities, and significant natural features in a statewide nature preserves system; (2) working with others to protect biological diversity; and (3) educating Kentuckians as to the value and purpose of nature preserves and biodiversity.

Commonwealth of Kentucky

**Kentucky State
 Nature Preserves
 Commission**

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